

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-06 ERDA-05 PM-04 SS-15 NSC-05
DODE-00 EB-07 NRC-05 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
COME-00 /063 R

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SS - MR. BRIDGES

----- 116171 /60

P 132149Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 302242

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, TH

SUBJECT:EXPORT LICENSES FOR NUCLEAR REACTOR AND FUEL

REFERENCES: A) BANGKOK 19725; B) STATE 170956;
-- C) BANGKOK 28495

1. AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, RTG IS ATTEMPTING TO PROCURE A TRIGA MARK III RESEARCH REACTOR, APPARENTLY TO REPLACE THE EXISTING CURTIS-WRIGHT REACTOR. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION HAS SUBMITTED EXPORT LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR OUR CONSIDERATION FOR THIS REACTOR AND FOR 19.6 KILOS OF URANIUM ENRICHED TO 20 PERCENT U-235 AND 8.6 GRAMS OF URANIUM ENRICHED TO 93 PERCENT.

2. AS INDICATED REFTTEL B, ERDA TEAM WHICH VISITED BANGHEN IN FEBRUARY FOUND NEED FOR SUBSTANTIAL UPGRADING OF PHYSICAL SECURITY. AS RESULT, ERDA RECOMMENDED THAT REACTOR EXPORT LICENSE NOT BE ISSUED UNTIL EMBASSY REPORTED THAT SUCH UPGRADING WAS UNDERWAY AND THAT FUEL LICENSE NOT BE ISSUED
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UNTIL IT WAS COMPLETED.

3. DEPAR-MENT AND ERDA ARE PLEASED AT SUBSTANTIAL THAI EFFORTS TOWARD SUCH UPGRADING REPORTED REFTEL A AND, AS RESULT, ARE PREPARED TO RECOMMEND TO NRC THAT REACTOR

EXPORT LICENSE BE ISSUED. ALTHOUGH THERE IS EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE, BASED ON THAI UPGRADING PROGRAM, THAT A FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION ON FUEL LICENSE ALSO WILL BE MADE TO NRC, ERDA IS NOT PREPARED TO AGREE TO DO SO UNTIL UP-GRADING COMPLETED. IN MEANTIME, REACTOR VENDOR, GENERAL ATOMIC, WOULD LIKE TO COMMENCE SHIPMENT OF (AND RECEIVE AT LEAST PARTIAL PAYMENT FOR) THE TRIGA REACTOR BEFORE END OF CALENDAR YEAR. REQUEST EMBASSY VIEWS SOONEST ON ANY PROBLEMS WHICH IT WOULD FORESEE IN ISSUING REACTOR EXPORT LICENSE PRIOR TO COMPLETING FULL EXECUTIVE BRANCH APPROVAL PROCESS ON FUEL EXPORT LICENSE APPLICATION. IF NONE IS PERCEIVED, DEPARTMENT IS PREPARED TO FORWARD ITS FAVORABLE VIEWS ON REACTOR LICENSE TO NRC PROMPTLY. EMBASSY ALSO SHOULD ADVISE DEPARTMENT SOONEST UPON COMPLETION OF PHYSICAL SECURITY UPGRADING SO THAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN ON FUEL EXPORT LICENSE.

4. RELATEDLY, CAN EMBASSY CONFIRM THAT TRIGA MARK III REACTOR WOULD REPLACE THE CURTIS-WRIGHT REACTOR, OR IS THE RTG INTENTION TO RETAIN THE LATTER FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH OPERATIONS?

5. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE INFORMATION REQUESTED, DEPART-MENT WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF WHETHER THERE ARE ANY FURTHER INDICATIONS OF RTG THINKING WHICH MIGHT LEND CREDENCE TO REMARKS OF THANAT KHOMAN REFLECTED IN PARA 8, REF. C. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPORT LICENSES, NUCLEAR REACTORS, NUCLEAR FUELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ullricre
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE302242
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EA/TB/JJHELBLE:EA/TB:MGH/SMJ
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760459-0580
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761247/aaaabosx.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BANGKOK 19725, 76 STATE 170956
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ullricre
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by ullricre>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EXPORT LICENSES FOR NUCLEAR REACTOR AND FUEL
TAGS: ENRG, MNUC, TECH, TH
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006